

HARPSWELL *BULLETIN*

News for Harpswell Residents & Property Owners from the Town Office – September '07
Town Web Site: www.harpswell.maine.gov

Mitchell Field Master Plan Update

On Tuesday, August 21, Alan Holt, a consultant with Holt & Lachman of Portland, Maine, publicly presented a draft master plan ([see site plan on page 2](#)) for the future use of Mitchell Field. The draft presentation was the culmination of extensive committee meetings and four public forums, one of which was an all day community design workshop, held over the last five months in an effort to gather public input and promote public participation in developing a plan. It is anticipated that there will be some modification to the draft before its final presentation to the Selectmen on September 13. Ultimately, the voters will be asked to consider adopting the master plan. Prior to any vote by the Town, a public hearing will be held. If the plan is approved, the Town will then consider its implementation.

Washburn & Doughty Negotiations

Washburn & Doughty, a shipbuilding company located in East Boothbay, Maine, approached the Town this past spring to express an interest in a possible expansion of the company's operations to Mitchell Field. Bruce Doughty, President of Washburn & Doughty, presented a proposal to the Selectmen at their meeting of May 10 asking for the Town to consider W&D's use of about 5 acres at Mitchell Field for building boats, primarily tugboats. Selectmen agreed to schedule a secret ballot vote on June 12 asking the Town for permission to enter into negotiations with W&D and also to make the W&D proposal an integral part of the Mitchell Field master plan. Voters overwhelmingly supported the warrant article. Selectmen assembled a negotiating team comprised of Jack Sylvester, Keith Brown and Tony Barrett—all with extensive business experience, to develop a long-term lease agreement with W&D. The negotiations have been ongoing since July 17. Once negotiated, the long-term lease will require Town Meeting approval.

School Consolidation

Based on action by the 123rd Legislature, most school districts in Maine must consider consolidation plans. Certain districts that meet the minimum of 2,500 students, or are high-performing or cannot find consolidation partners (i.e., island schools) are not required to consolidate but may face disincentives for not doing so. Because it meets the student population threshold of 2,500 students, M.S.A.D # 75 does not have to consolidate; however, by staying intact it will face reduced state subsidy of administration, special education, transportation and facilities. The M.S.A.D # 75 Board of Directors voted on August 23 to send two letters of intent to the Commissioner of Education—one to keep the district together as a stand alone unit, the other to consolidate with Lisbon. Developing a school consolidation plan with Lisbon will require the formation of a regional planning committee with three representatives from each of the five towns—one municipal representative, one school board representative and one at-large member. The M.S.A.D. # 75 School Board will make a decision by December 2007 whether to follow through on the consolidation plan or remain a stand alone unit. If a consolidation plan moves forward, a municipal referendum must be held in each town by January 2008. The municipality seeking to join the new unit must receive a majority affirmative vote to do so. The towns currently in the district must approve a consolidated plan by majority vote of the combined four towns.

Open Space Plan for Harpswell

Planning for Harpswell's open spaces began this summer with public forums held in May and July enabling residents to identify cultural, water-related, wildlife, recreational, and scenic areas they felt should be prioritized for future preservation. The Open Space Plan will endeavor to preserve Harpswell's unique village-rural character by planning for future residential growth and by providing strategies and guidance that will realize the Town's long-term vision for conserving valued open spaces. The completed plan is expected to be presented to the Selectmen in late fall.

Grant/Loan Program for Failed Septic Systems

The Town received \$65,000 in Community Development Block Grant Funding which will be added to \$50,000 already approved by Town Meeting voters, to launch a grant and revolving loan program to assist low to moderate income homeowners with replacing failed septic systems. Anyone interested in inquiring about eligibility to participate in the program is encouraged to contact Tracey Thibault in the Codes Enforcement Office.

Voting Site Improvements

The Merriconeag Grange, the Old Orr's Island Schoolhouse and the Cundy's Harbor Community Building have been brought into compliance with current handicap-accessibility standards. One of the most significant improvements was made at the Grange by the addition of a handicap-access parking area. The Town intends to submit to the Secretary of State's Office for reimbursement of up to 80% of its costs for bringing these sites into compliance so that the facilities can continue to be used for voting purposes.

2006 Maine Residents Property Tax and Rent Refund Program

Applications are now available at the Town Office or online at www.maine.gov/revenue for the 2006 Property Tax and Rent Refund Program. Residents may qualify if:

- You do not have a spouse or dependent(s) and your 2006 household income was \$80,750 or less; or
- You have spouse or dependent(s) and your 2006 household income was \$105,750 or less
AND
- Your 2006 property tax was more than 4% of your 2006 household income; or,
- The rent you paid in 2006 was more than 20% of your 2006 household income

NOTE: Low-income Seniors do not need to meet these requirements

Applications must be filed by June 2, 2008. The Town's Treasurer Marguerite Kelly is available by appointment to assist anyone with the application. Please call the Town Office at 833-5771 to schedule an appointment.

Fall Recreation Programs

The following programs will be offered this fall: David Higgins will be teaching Digital Photography classes at the Harpswell Town Office afternoons and evenings. Four week classes begin September 17 and October 22 on Camera Techniques, Image Processing, and Intermediate Techniques. Adult co-ed pick-up basketball will resume on Wednesdays starting September 5, 6-8pm at Harpswell Islands School. Bridge for adults with playing experience is ongoing every Tuesday 1pm at the Town Office. For children there is Pee Wee Soccer, Field Hockey, Music and Movement (ages birth-4), Cross Country, and Wednesday morning Karate at both elementary schools. Please check at the Town Office or Town Web Site www.harpswell.maine.gov for flyers or contact Director Liz Bouvé at harpswellrec@gwi.net or 833-5771 for more information.

Meals on Wheels Available to Harpswell Residents

What is Meals on Wheels? A national program of assistance to homebound people, primarily over 60, who are at some level of nutritional risk.

What is nutritional risk? An inability to prepare meals due to illness or conditions such as light headedness or imbalance; to operate simple kitchen appliances; or to shop regularly.

What does this service provide? Five nutritious meals per week delivered to your home by a volunteer driver.

How much does it cost? There is no charge, though recipients have the opportunity to make contributions. Suggested donation for a meal is \$3.50

How do I apply? Call 729-0475. If you are homebound, you will begin receiving meals within a few days and will receive a home visit to assess your needs.

Are there other benefits? Volunteer drivers perform regular health & safety checks with each meal.

Committee Vacancies

The following Town Committees have openings: Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Emergency Services, Housing, Library, Recreation, Solid Waste and Town Lands.

If you are interested in serving, please fill out an application at the Town Office or online at www.harpswell.maine.gov

2007 Tax Bills Due—1/2 due September 15, 2007; 1/2 due December 15, 2007

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Town of Harpswell
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